

Pope A Metaphysician!

(1754)

AN ANONYMOUS PAMPHLET IN DEFENSE OF LEIBNIZ

Gotthold Lessing and Moses Mendelssohn

DURING THE SIXTY years after the death of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz in 1716, his philosophy, his “system of optimism,” became the basis for the idea of “the pursuit of happiness,” the inalienable right for which the American War of Independence was declared.

But during that interlude, in the 1740’s and 1750’s, a thorough attempt to destroy Leibniz’s influence was launched in Europe, originating with Sir Isaac Newton’s promoters and, in Leibniz’s native Germany, centered around the Berlin Royal Academy of Science. Under Frederick the Great’s patronage, philosophers and mathematicians led by Voltaire, Euler, and Maupertuis, promoted pessimism and cynicism in morals, entropy in physical and mathematical sciences. They attacked Leibniz more and more audaciously, most famously in Voltaire’s “Candide” (1759), a savage ridicule of Leibniz’s idea of “the best of all possible worlds.”

In 1754 a spirited defense of Leibniz was begun: by Moses Mendelssohn, who became known as founder of modern Judaism and “the German Socrates”; and Gotthold Lessing, one of the founders of the German Classical drama. The pamphlet translated here was their first of many collaborations, over years.

The occasion was a calculated attack on Leibniz by the Berlin Academy; a “prize essay contest,” comparing Leibniz’s philosophical and scientific work, to a mere didactic (long



Moses Mendelssohn

Corbis/Bettmann



Gotthold Lessing

The Granger Collection

and moralizing) poem of Alexander Pope’s, his “Essay on Man” (1733). Pope had been Poet Laureate of Great Britain for decades, famed for his endless series of rhyming couplets; nearly all his poems were moral/political tracts, disguised in never-changing meter and rhyme. (It is interesting that only a few

years after this degrading attempt to put forward Pope as Leibniz improved [!], came the first attempts to claim that the empiricist Francis Bacon was really the author of Shakespeare’s plays.)

As to Lessing/Mendelssohn’s opening question, “Can a poet also be a metaphysician?”: It is useful to quote Socrates, when asked in Plato’s dialogue “Phaedo,” why he had taken up writing poetry in his last imprisonment, prior to his execution. Socratic paradox lies at the heart of the quality of metaphor which Classical poets clothe in beautiful verse. Socrates himself had just composed a fable in verse, of the paradox of pleasure and pain, “two opposite bodies joined in a single head.” He said:

In the course of my life I have often had intimations in dreams “that I should compose music.” The same dream came to me sometimes in one form, and sometimes in another, but always saying the same or nearly the same words: “Cultivate and make music.” And hitherto, I had imagined that this was only intended to exhort and encourage me in the study of philosophy, which has

been the pursuit of my life, and is the noblest and best of music. . . . But . . . the dream might have meant music in the popular sense of the word, and being under sentence of death, I thought it would be safer for me to satisfy the scruple, and in obedience to the dream, to compose a few verses before I departed."

With the intense anti-Leibniz climate around the Berlin Academy, this pamphlet was published anonymously, and was at first thought to be Lessing's alone. Mendelssohn was later denied membership in the Academy by Frederick the Great.

TASK

THE ACADEMY demands an investigation of the system of Pope, which consists in the phrase *all is good*. And more precisely, that one:

First, specify the true sense of this phrase, according to the hypothesis of its supporters;

Second, compare it exactly with the system of optimism, or the selection of the best; and

Third, bring forth the grounds upon which this system of Pope should be either upheld or overthrown.

FOREWORD

It were pointless to wish to deny that the present treatise is instigated by the recent competition of the Prussian Royal Academy of Science, and thus one has not sought to hide this instigation itself in any way. Only to say, that if the reader on this account would think of a beauty who abandons herself to the hostile public, out of vexation because the bridegroom around whom she, with her fellow maidens, has danced, will not have her; he would so for certain be thinking of an entirely false comparison. The judges of the Academy will know best, that they have not been troubled with this piece. It encountered circumstances which hindered its submission, but which did not contradict its becoming known through the press. To name only one of those circumstances—it has two authors, and could thus appear under no other motto than this:

Compulerant—greges Corydon & Thyrsis in unum.

[Corydon and Thyrsis drove their flocks together into one.]

Imagine now, if it had won the crown! What a strife would have sprung up between the authors! And they would gladly have no such thing come between them.

* * *

The Academy demands an examination of Pope's system, which is contained in the statement, *all is good*.

* * *

I beg pardon that I must confess at the very outset, that to me the way in which this question is expressed does not appear to be the best. For Thales, Plato, Chrysippus, Leibniz, and Spinoza, and countless others, unanimously own it thus: *that all shall be for the good*; so must it either be, in all systems, expressed in these words, or must nothing be contained therein. They are the conclusion, which each from his special mansion of learning has drawn, and which perhaps will yet be drawn from a hundred more. But they are also the confession of him who has philosophized without special structures of learning. If one were to want to make them into a canon, according to which all questions enveloped therein were to be decided, more comfort than reason would come about thereby. *God has willed it to be so, and because he has willed it so, it must be good*: this is truthfully a very easy answer, with which one is never left high and dry. By it, one is directed, but not enlightened. It is the most noteworthy piece of the worldly-wisdom of fools; for what is more foolish, than to take each and every event of Nature as an indication of the will of God, without even considering whether the accident in question could have been an object of the divine will?

If I could thus believe that he who conceived of the Academy's competition has, in the words *all is good*, absolutely demanded that a system should be found, then I would reasonably ask, whether he also takes the word "system" in its strict meaning, as he really had ought to. He can only rightly desire that one depend upon his sense

than upon his words. Especially so, when the true sense shines unnoticed through the false words, as it does sufficiently here through the particular determination of the phrase.

From this, I imagine that it follows that the Academy demands an investigation of that system which Pope has invented or taken up; by means of that investigation, the truth—that *all shall be for the good*—to confirm, to derive, or however else one would express it. Only that one must not say that the system must *lie* [*consist*] in these words. It lies no more actually therein than the premises lie in a conclusion, even could there be an unlimited number of them.

Perhaps one will suspect me of merely delaying by this trifle—to the matter, then! *An investigation of Pope's system*—I haven't been able to think about this without asking myself, rather with astonishment: Who is Pope?—A poet.—A poet? What business does Saul have among the prophets? What business does a poet have among the metaphysicians? Yet, a poet need not at all times be a poet. I see no contradiction in that he can also be a philosopher. Even that same one, who in the Spring of his life roved about among love-gods and graces, among fauns and muses, with the ivy staff in his hand; even that same one can, indeed, easily in the ripe Autumn of his years don the mantle of philosophy, and let manly seriousness replace youthful joking. This change is the way the powers of our souls develop themselves, suitable enough.

Yet, another question brings this excuse to nothing—When? Where has Pope played the metaphysician, that I am not giving him credit for?—Even, when he most showed his strengths in the art of poetry. In a poem. In a poem, then, and surely one which in all strictness deserves that name, he has brought forward a system which an entire Academy considers worthy of investigation? So by him, then, are the poet and the strict philosopher—and nothing can be stricter than the systematic—not two figures that can be changed one into the other, but rather, he is both at the same time; he is the one, in that in which he is the other?

This I found hard to swallow—notwithstanding I sought by every means to convince myself of it. And finally the following thought took control, that I will call a

PREDECESSOR INVESTIGATION:

Whether a poet, as a poet, can have a system?

Here I would have, perhaps, an opportunity to send forth an explanation of the word *system*. Yet I am held back by the modest idea that I have already disclosed it above. Is it so unsuitable as to be unnecessary that an assembly of

philosophers, that is, an assembly of systematic minds, say what a system should be?

It were hardly suitable for them to say what a poem should be; if this word had not been defined in such a distinctive way, and if I had not had to show in which way it most suitably applied to my investigation.

A poem is a perfectly *sensuous* form of speech. Now one knows how much the words *perfect* and *sensuous* are expressive of, and how often this explanation (definition) draws preference over all others when one would judge superficially of the nature of poetry.

A *system* and a *sensuous* form of speech—yet the contradiction of these two things does not appear clear enough in our eyes. I will have to include the special case upon which we have come even here, and set it metaphorically in the general idea of the system.

A system of metaphysical truths, then, and a sensuous form of speech, both in one—do these rub together well?

What must the metaphysician do, before all else?—He must define the words which he intends to use; he must never turn them into another signification than the one defined for them; he must exchange them for none with merely the appearance of equal validity.

To what of this does the poet pay attention? Nothing of it. Simply a beautiful sound is, for him, sufficient cause to choose one expression in place of another, and the exchange of synonymous words is for him a beauty.

One adds to this the use of figures [metaphors]—and wherein consists the essence of these themselves?—That they never remain at a strict [narrow] truth; that they say easily too much, and easily too little—Only a metaphysician, of the Bohemian species, can be forgiven them.

And the ordering of the metaphysician? He goes, in continual inferences, always from the simpler to the more difficult; he takes nothing in advance, nor afterwards. If one could see truths grow out of one another in a sensuous way, so would their growth observe the very same steps [degrees] through which he had us go up in persuading us of the same.

Order only! What has the poet to do with that? And moreover such a slavish order. Nothing is more opposed to the inspiration of a true poet.

One would scarcely allow one to further draw out these, hardly celebrated, thoughts, without setting them against experience. Only experience also is on my side. Suppose one thus asks me, if I know the “Lucrece” [of Pope]; if I know that his poetry comprehends the system of the Epicure? Suppose one quotes to me other like works of his; so would I answer entirely confidently: “Lucrece” and his like make a verse-maker, but not a poet. [NB: Milton on Dryden: “an excellent rhymers, but no poet”—PBG]. I don't deny that one can bring forth a

system in meter or also in rhyme; rather, I deny that this system brought forth in meter or in rhyme will be a poem. One need only remember what I understand as a poem, and all that lies in the concept of a sensuous form of speech. Hardly will it be more certainly applied, in its entire breadth, to the poetry of another poet, than to that of Pope.

The philosopher, who would climb Parnassus, and the poet, who would have grave and restful wisdom given down to him in the valleys, meet each other just halfway, where they exchange their vestments, so to speak, and go back again. Each brings the other's form back to his dwelling with him; but not more than the form. The poet is a more philosophical poet, and the *wisdom of the world becomes a more poetic wisdom. Only a more philosophical poet is still not a philosopher for that, and a more poetic *philosophy [*"Weltweise,"* worldly wisdom—same word as earlier in sentence—PBG] is yet thereby no poet.

But that's how the English are. Their great minds are always the greatest, and their rare heads must always be wonders. No fame appears enough to them, not even naming Pope the pre-eminent philosophical poet. They would have him be even so great a philosopher as poet. That's it; they would have that impossibility, or they would take Pope to be greatly degraded as a poet. But they will certainly not have the latter; thus, they'll have the former.

Up to now I have shown—at least would have shown—that a poet, as poet, can make no system. Henceforth I will show that he also wants to make none; even supposing he could; even supposing thus, that my difficulties do not involve any impossibilities, and that his genius gives him the means to hand to rise above them.

I will stay just on Pope. His poem is supposed to be no barren concatenation of truths. He himself calls it a moral poem, in which he would justify the ways of God to man's sight. He sought more a lively expression than a profound demonstration.—Then what had he to do well in this regard? He had to present to his readers, without doubt, all the truths bound up in this subject in their strongest and most beautiful light.

Now let one consider, that not all parts of a system can be of equal clarity. Some truths yield themselves simply from the foundation-principles; some are drawn from them by accumulated inferences. But these latter can be the clearest in another system, in which the former are perhaps the most obscure.

The philosopher makes nothing of these little inconveniences of systems. The truth which he reaches through a single conclusion, is to him no more a truth thereby, than

that at which he can arrive only through twenty inferences; if only these twenty inferences are not fallacious or deceitful. Enough, that he has brought everything into connection; enough, that he is able to overlook this connection [lattice] at one glance, as an entirety, without being held up by the fine details of the inter-connections themselves.

But the poet thinks entirely otherwise. Everything that he says ought to make an equally strong impression; all his truths should be just as convincingly moving. And to be able to do this, he has no other means than to express this truth according to this system, and that according to another.—He speaks with the Epicure when he would raise up pleasure, and with the Stoic where he should prize virtue. Pleasure, in the verses of a Seneca, if he wished to remain at all faithful to his fundamental principles, would make a very sad procession; just as virtue, in the songs of an ever-consistent Epicure, would have rather the look of a courtesan.

However, I will give place to the objection which one could make against this. I will let it occur to me: Pope may be an exception. He may have possessed enough *art* and *will*, in his poem, if not fully to sketch a system, at least with his fingers to point to a certain one. He may have limited himself only to those truths which allowed themselves to be sensibly brought forth according to this system. He may have earlier so much overdone the others, that beyond that there is no duty of the poet to exhaust everything.

Well! It must be demonstrated, and there could be no better way to demonstrate it, than if I stick exactly to the points prescribed by the Academy. According to these, my treatise will consist of three sections, to which at the end I will add some historical and critical notes.

FIRST SECTION

Compilation of those Propositions in which Pope's System Should Consist

One may seek these propositions almost nowhere other than in the entire *first* Epistle, and now and again in the *fourth*.

I have come across no single proposition, which would constitute just by itself the mother-lode of a system, and I doubt whether one will meet with one even in the following *thirteen* [Epistles], which would serve the purpose of bringing [the system] into view.

The order in which I will set them here is not the order which Pope has followed in his exposition. Rather, it is that which Pope must have followed in thought, even if he has set down another.

FIRST PROPOSITION

*Of all possible systems, God must have
made the best.*

This proposition does not properly belong to Pope; much more do his words show clearly enough that he takes it as a settled matter and borrows it from another.

Epistle 1, Lines 43-44

Of Systems possible, if 'tis confest,
That Wisdom infinite must form the best &c.

That is: *if man must confess, that an infinite Wisdom must create the best out of all possible systems.* Whereas here no uncertainty can be declared; because the remainder of his principles follow from this condition, so it must be here as if he had said: *for man necessarily must confess,* etc.

SECOND PROPOSITION

*In this best system, everything must cohere,
or if not, all things fall one upon another.*

Epistle 1, Line 45

Where all must fall, or all coherent be.

In the general edition which I have before me, the second half of this line reads: "or not coherent be." I suspect, not without grounds, that instead of "not" must be read "all." But supposing Pope has really written "not," still no other sense of it is possible, than that which I have expressed in the proposition. —Yet here we have to do only with what Pope understands under the coherence of the world. He certainly does not explain himself very expressly on it; but in various places it is shown that he understands, under this, that arrangement by which all grades of perfection in the world were occupied, without anywhere a breach to be met with. He adds there, to the words already given (Line 46),

And all that rises, rise in due degree.

which is, taken together with what has gone before: *Everything must fall together, or all be coherent, and all that rises must rise in its due degree.* It follows that he finds the coherence in that everything in the world rises step by step. And he says further (line 233): since some existences should become perfect; so either the degraded existences must displace them, or a gap must remain in the *entirety* of Creation, as if the entire chain [*Leiter*, ladder—but Pope's use is chain of being—PBG] be shattered, so soon as a single step is broken.

Each System in gradation roll (Line 239):

Every system progresses by steps; says even this, really. And even that gradual degradation he calls the great chain which stretches down from the infinite to man, and

from man to nothingness. (1st Epistle, Lines 232-236). The following lines from the Fourth Epistle perhaps make the poet's meaning clearer. (Lines 47ff.)

Order is Heav'n's great Law; and this confest,
Some are and must be, mightier than the rest,
More rich, more wise &c.

Thus he assumes for his ordering this teaching, according to which all grades of perfection are distinguished. And from the following principles one will see that he connects no other concept to the coherence of the world, than that we have already set down.

THIRD PRINCIPLE

*In the chain of life and feeling must be
found somewhere such an existence as
that of mankind.*

1st Epistle, Lines 47-48

—in the scale of life and sense, 'tis plain
There must be, somewhere such a rank as Man.

This principle follows immediately from the foregoing. For in the best of worlds, all grades of perfection ought to achieve their reality; so also must the rank which belongs to man not remain empty. Thus man will neither have been left out of the best of worlds, nor been able to be made more perfect. In both cases a grade of perfection would not be realized, and thereby coherence [*Zusammenhang*, connection] would not exist in the best of worlds.

By this point one considers how little *Pope's* conclusion involves, if we were to explain the coherence of the world otherwise than in the preceding principles.

Of Systems possible, if 'tis confest,
That Wisdom infinite must form the best,
Where all &c.—
Then in the scale of life and sense, 'tis plain
There must be, some where, such a rank as Man.

From no other cause, says *Pope*, must such a rank, such a grade of perfection as man occupies, be read, than because in the best of worlds, all either falls one upon another or hangs together, and must raise itself to the proper grade; that is, because no rank may remain unfilled.

Better than this has Pope not believed, presumably to prevent the objection: why was such an existence as mankind created, or why was it not created more perfect? More nearly to answer this latter, he makes use of the unchangeability of the existence [*Wesen*, being] of all things, and says that these demands were as ridiculous as to wish the foot the hand, the hand the head, and the head with its senses not plainly the implement of the spir-

it. In the Fourth Epistle he expresses himself still more strongly, claiming: the question, Why man is not created more perfect, means in other words nothing but this; Why were man not God, and the Earth not Heaven?

FOURTH PRINCIPLE

The happiness of each creature subsists in a condition which is appropriate for its existence.

1st Epistle, Line 175

All in exact proportion to their state.

and in the 71st Line of the same Epistle he says of man, especially:

His being measur'd to his state and place.

Consequently, says *Pope*, the question comes mainly to this, that one prove man to be truly placed in a condition in the world which is proper for his being and his grade of perfection:

1st Epistle, Lines 49-50

And all the question (wrangle ere so long)
Is only this, if God has plac'd him wrong?

FIFTH PRINCIPLE

Man is as perfect as he should be.

1st Epistle, Line 70

Man's as perfect as he ought.

That is; the condition of man is really suitable to his being, and thereby man is perfect. But that may be so, he further elucidates, if one reflects upon the condition itself in which man lives; which he does in the following lines.

SIXTH PRINCIPLE

*God works by general, and not by special laws;
and in special cases he does not work favor or
inclination [Lieblings Willen] against his
general laws.*

4th Epistle, Lines 33-34

—the universal cause

Ask not by partial but by general laws.

and Line 119

Think we like some weak Prince th'eternal Cause
Prone for his favorites to reverse his Laws?

The poet draws these thoughts out further in what follows, and explicates them with examples. But he appears thereby to have taken up the system of *Malebranche*, who makes only the general laws the subject of God's will, in order to vindicate the original author of the world, if just from these general laws imperfections ensue.

The followers of this philosopher consequently claim that God has acted according to His wisdom and so the world must be regulated by general laws. In special cases, the application of these general laws may well bring forth something which, in and for itself, may be either completely useless or entirely injurious, and so really contrary to the idea of God: only let it be enough, that the general laws exist for important purposes, and that the evils which arise therefrom in a few special cases may not have been able to arise without a special decree [of Providence]. They put forward an example: the general material [*mechanischen*, mechanical] laws by which the rain falls at certain times, have inexpressible advantages. But how often does the rain water the barren stone, where it really produces nothing of use, and does it not often bring on the flood, where it is definitely injurious? Their opinion thus follows, that even those same imperfections can also correspond to the best of worlds, because no general laws are possible, which could express the divine idea [*Ansicht*, view] [special design] in all special cases. Or, they ask, ought God by a will of favor [*Lieblings Willen*]
—let this favorite by, for example, the inquisitive philosopher thirsting for knowledge—break the general laws by which an Aetna must spout fire?

4th Epistle, Lines 121-122

Shall burning Aetna, if a sage requires,
Forget to thunder, and recall her fires?

SEVENTH PRINCIPLE

No evil comes from God.

That is: the evil which transpires in the world has never been the subject of God's will.

4th Epistle, Line 110

God sends not ill.

Pope has concluded this without danger from the foregoing. If evil only inheres in special cases, and is a consequence of the general laws; but God founded these general laws, as general laws, for good, and has made them subject to His will; so one can not say that He has really willed the evil which flows from them, and without which they were not general laws. Our poet seeks to make this absolution a great deal stronger, when he says that even thus this evil ensuing from the general laws is very rare. He has herewith, perhaps, meant to say only this much, that God has chosen those general laws out of which the least evil might arise. Only he expresses himself in a very peculiar way; he says (1st Epistle, Line 143): "th' exceptions are few," and in another place "Nature lets it fall," namely the evil. I will have to touch upon this point in my third section.

EIGHTH PRINCIPLE

Not the least change can take place in the world, which should not draw after itself a disorder in all the world structures of which the whole consists.

1st Epistle, Lines 233-236

—on superior powers

Were we to press, inferior might on ours:
Or in the full creation leave a Void,
Where, one step broken, the great scale's destroy'd.

and Lines 239-242

And if each System in gradation roll,
Alike essential to th' amazing whole;
The least confusion but in one, not all
That system only, but the whole must fall.

NINTH PRINCIPLE

Natural and moral ills are consequences of the general laws, which God often turns to the good of the whole, and often had rather allow, than that he would have had to act through a special will, against his general [will].

1st Epistle, Lines 145-146

If the great end be human happiness,
Then Nature *deviates*, and can man do less?

4th Epistle, Lines 112-113

Or partial ill is universal good
—or Nature lets it fall.

1st Epistle, Lines 161-162

—all subsists by elemental strife
And Passions are the Elements of life.

TENTH PRINCIPLE

All has not been made on behalf of man's will, rather man himself is, perhaps, there for the will of something else.

1st Epistle, Line 57

—man, who here seems principal alone,
Perhaps acts second to some sphere unknown.

3rd Epistle, Line 24

Made beast in aid of man, and man of beast,

ELEVENTH PRINCIPLE

Ignorance of our future state has been given to us for our good.

Without it, says the poet, who would be able to bear his life? (1st Epistle, Line 76)

and Line 81

Oh blindness to the future! Kindly giv'n
That each &c.

But instead of knowledge of the future, says *Pope*, Heaven has given us the gift of hope, which alone is able to make our last moments sweet to us.

TWELFTH PRINCIPLE

Man cannot, without misfortune, wish for clearer or more refined sentiments.

The location in which he explicates this is too long to transcribe here. It is in the First Epistle, and goes from the 185th to the 198th line. But this principle, and the two preceding, are really closer to demonstrations of the fifth principle, and want to establish that such gifts and capabilities fall to man's lot, as best serve his state. They would also answer the question, upon what, in *Pope's* opinion, this strife might principally depend.

If God has placed him (*man*) wrong?

THIRTEENTH PRINCIPLE

The passions of man, which are nothing but different variations of self-love, without which Reason would not be effective, have been given to him for the best.

2nd Epistle, Line 83

Modes of self-love the passions we may call.

the same, Line 44

Self-love to urge, and Reason to restrain.

and 1st Epistle, Line 162

Passions are the elements of life.

Pope surely confesses that uncountable weaknesses and mistakes arise from the passions; but also that these are grounded upon a general law, which is this: that they all might to be set in motion by a real, or an apparent good. But God (according to the Ninth Principle) has had to allow all the evil which ensues from the general laws, because he had otherwise to overturn the general laws by a special decree.

2nd Epistle, Line 84

'Tis real good, or seeming, moves them all.

CONCLUDING PRINCIPLE

Out of all these principles now taken together, *Pope* believes he can draw the conclusion, *that all shall be for the good*, que tout ce qui est, est bien [that all which is, is good]. I here express his sense in the language of his translator. But is it well and good for him to rely upon

this? What if *Pope* had not said that all is *good*, but rather only that all is *right*? Would one take *right* and *good* for one and the same? Here are his words:

1st Epistle, Line 286
—whatever is, is right.

One will hopefully not commit an affront to a poet, such as *Pope* is, and say that he has been forced by rhyme to set *right* here instead of some other word. At least, in the Fourth Epistle (Line 382) where he repeats this expression, he is free of any pressure of rhyme, and it must have been with serious thought that he did not say *good* or *well*. And why has he not said these, indeed? Because it would have clashed openly with the rest of his thoughts. There, he himself confessed *that Nature allows some evil to befall*; so well could he say, that not withstanding this, all were *right*, but not possibly that all were *good*. *Right* is all, in that all, even evil itself, has been grounded in the generality of laws subject to the divine will. But all were only *good*, if these general laws at all times agreed with the divine ideas [*Ansichten*]. Surely will I be glad to confess that also the French *bien* [well] says less than *bon* [good], indeed that it almost says something different; and in the same way, that the German *gut*, when it is used *adverbially* [meaning *well*—PBG] and not *substantively* [meaning *the good*], often expresses something which is really close to *right*. But the question is, has one constantly thought of this fine distinction, as often as one has heard the Popean: all is good [this time “*es ist alles gut*,” it is all good—PBG] or “tout ce qui est, est bien”?

I have nothing more to draw attention to here.—If one will be so good as to allow the forgiving principles to pass as a system, I can be right well satisfied with it for the while. I will desire that it might be maintained in the reader’s understanding at least until I, in the third section, in part with its founder’s own weapons, can destroy it. I would not put myself to the danger of leaving such a weak structure standing before him [the reader—PBG] for even a moment, had I not here to turn, of necessity, to the second of the prescribed points of the Academy.

SECOND SECTION

Comparison of the Above Principles with the Leibnizian Teachings

If I might attribute to the Academy other views than one attributes to a society which is constituted for the advancement of science, I would ask: Is one supposed, through this mandated comparison, to interpret the

Popean principles as philosophic, or more the Leibnizian principles as poetic?

Yet that said, I can save my question, and turn myself entirely to the comparison. At best, what underlies this may be an entirely too exaggerated opinion of the more than human intelligence of the English.

I will, in my comparison, hold to the order of the above principles, but without touching upon all of them. Some are there as connectives; and some are much too special, and more moral than metaphysical. I will be able to pass over types lightly, and the comparison will still be complete.

FIRST PRINCIPLE

God must, of all possible systems, have created the best. This Pope says, and Leibniz also, in more than one place, has expressed himself perfectly thus. What thought each of them has meant by this, must be illuminated from elsewhere. Warburton has been completely wrong, in wanting to see this principle, independent of the other principles, not so much [not only] as Leibnizian but as Platonic. I will show this further below. I will only note here, that whoever conceived of the Academy’s question would necessarily have to have chosen this principle and no other, in place of the proposition *all is good*, if he wished with some grounds to say that a system could lie therein, which would be, perhaps not the Leibnizian, but yet something similar.

SECOND PRINCIPLE

In the best system, all must be connected. What Pope understands by this connection, we have seen. Namely, just that quality of the world, whereby all grades of perfection would be filled out with existences, from nothingness to divinity.

Leibniz, on the other hand, puts this connection in this: that all [existences] in the world may be intelligibly explained, one from the other. He looks at the world as a quantity of contingent things, which in part coexist, and in part follow from one another. These distinct things would, combined together, make no whole, if they were not all in accord with one another like the wheels of a machine; that is, if from each thing it was not possible clearly to set forth why all others, relative to it, are so and not otherwise; and from each preceding condition or state of a thing, why this or that will follow from it. This, an unlimited Reason must fully be able to conceptualize from it, and the least part of the world must for him be a mirror, in which he can see all the other parts which exist beside it, as well as all states in which the world has been or ever will be.

But never has *Leibniz* said that all grades of perfec-

tion, in the best of worlds, must be occupied. Nor do I believe that he would have been able to say it. For if he might say, even as *Pope: the Creation is full*; so must he, nevertheless, have understood by these words an entirely different sense than *Pope* has understood by them. To speak as *Leibniz*, Creation is everywhere full, in the best of worlds, for the reason that everywhere one thing is grounded in another, and thus space, on the ordering of contiguous things, is nowhere interrupted. In a similar manner, time is also full, because the states which in themselves follow one another, never cease to be grounded in one another as effects and causes. But *Pope* understands something entirely different under his *full creation*, as can be concluded from the connection of his words.

1st Epistle, Line 235

—on superior powers

Were we to press, inferior might on ours:

Or in the full creation leave a Void.

Namely, for him the Creation is *full* only on this account, that all the levels in it are occupied.

And this is one more proof that two different authors are not of the same opinion, merely because at a certain place they express themselves with the same words. *Pope* had an entirely different concept of *empty* and *full* in the appearance of Creation, than did *Leibniz*; and thus can they both say: “the creation is full,” without having anything further in common than the bare words.

THIRD PRINCIPLE

From the foregoing *Pope* concludes *a priori*, that man necessarily will have to be found in the world, because otherwise the place among existences which belongs to him would be empty.

Leibniz, on the contrary, shows that necessary existence of man *a posteriori*, and concludes, because man is actually present, that such an existence has belonged to the best of worlds.

SIXTH PRINCIPLE

Pope, as has been seen, appears to have been of one opinion in this principle with *P. Malebranche*. He claims, that is, that God can allow evil to happen in the world purely on this account, because He does not wish to overturn his general will through special decrees. Necessarily, thus, misery [*Mangel*, deficiencies] must be met with in the world, which God had been able to prevent in an uninjured best of worlds, had he wished to overturn his general design, in some cases, through a special decree. One may look only at the following citation to recognize that this really is *Pope's* meaning.

4th Epistle, Line 112

Or partial ill is universal good

—or Nature lets it fall.

This *or, or* shows well enough that evil, in the two cases, contributes nothing to the perfection of the world, but rather that Nature, or the general law, lets it happen.

But what does *Leibniz* claim about all this? *Leibniz* claims, that the general law [*Ratschluss*] of God arises from all his special decrees [*Ratschlüssen*] taken together, and that God can suspend no evil through a special decree without disadvantage to the best of worlds. For according to him, the system of purposes is so exactly connected to the system of effective causes, that one can see the latter as a consequence of the former. Thus one can not say that from the general laws of nature—that is, from the system of effective causes,—something follows which does not agree with the divine purposes; for simply from the best combination of special designs, are arisen the general effective causes and the wisest of universes [*Ganze*, wholes]. (See on this the *Theodicy*, Articles 204, 205, 206.)

And from this it becomes clear, that *Pope* and *Leibniz* can not once be united in the concept of the best of worlds. *Leibniz* says: where different principles [*Regeln*, rules] of perfection are to be put together, to make a whole; there, necessarily, some of the same must strike against one another, and through this striking-together either contradictions must arise, or exceptions [to the principles—PBG] must ensue on one side. The best of worlds is thus, according to him, that one in which the least such exceptions occur, and those to the least important principles. Now, thence surely arise the moral and natural imperfections which we suffer in the world; only they can make arise a higher ordering, which these exceptions have inescapably made. Had God permitted one evil less to arise in the world, he would have prevented a higher ordering, a more important principle of perfection, from the side of which no such exceptions should occur.

Pope and *Malebranche*, on the contrary, allow that God, without injuring the best of worlds, has been able to allow some evil to arise from it without changing anything noteworthy in it. But notwithstanding, he would rather assure the generality of the laws from which this evil flows, and would still rather preserve them without ever once changing this, his determination, by a special act of will.

EIGHTH PRINCIPLE

Furthermore, as we have seen, *Pope* claimed that the least change in the world stretches throughout all Nature, because any existence which achieves a greater

perfection must leave a breach or gap behind it, and this breach must either remain empty, which would overturn all coherence [*Zusammenhang*, connection], or the existences below must be drawn into it, which could cause nothing other than a disorder throughout all of Creation.

Leibniz knows no such breach or gap as *Pope* asserts, because he claims no such gradual degradation [downward succession] of beings. A breach in Nature can, in his opinion, not otherwise come to be, than where existences cease to be grounded in one another; there, ordering would be broken, or which is just the same, space remain empty. Yet *Leibniz* says, with far more rigorous reason than *Pope*, that the smallest change in the world has an influence on the whole, and that because each being is a mirror of all other beings, and each state the abstract of all states. Thus if the smallest part of Creation change, or become transformed into another state, this change must be shown through all beings, just as in a clock, all as to both space and time will change as soon as the least of its tiny gears be filed down.

NINTH PRINCIPLE

Imperfections in the world result, according to *Pope's* system, *either* for the best of the whole (wherein is understood the perfection, at the same time [as the imperfection], from a greater imperfection), *or* because no conceivable general laws of the divine purpose could have acted sufficiently in all special cases.

According to *Leibniz's* opinion, on the contrary, all imperfections in the world must necessarily serve toward the perfection of the whole, or otherwise their exemption from the general laws would surely follow. He asserts that God has employed the general laws, not arbitrarily or capriciously, but rather in such a way that they, from their prudent combination, produce his special designs, or that the simple principles of perfection strive with one another; and imperfection exists since unavoidably there must be some exception. But no exception can take place, but where the simple principles of perfection strive with one another; and every exception must from thence make the occurrence of a higher ordering possible; that is, it must serve the perfection of the whole.

Will it really be necessary to bring forward more differences between the Popean principles and the Leibnizian teachings? I believe not. And for what would more distinctions be needed? As for the special moral principles, one is well aware that there all philosophers agree, no matter how different their fundamental principles. The similar-sounding expression of the former must never mislead us to believe the latter to be the same; for otherwise it would be very easy to make, out of everyone

who ever wished to reason about the arrangement of the world, a *Leibnizian*, just as with *Pope*.

But now since *Pope* absolutely does not deserve this designation, so it also becomes necessary that the testing of his system of principles be something entirely different from a combat with the *Leibnizian* system of the best of worlds. The followers of *Gottsched* say that they [Pope's principles—PBG] will be something entirely different than the Academy has wished they might be. Yet what does it matter to me what *Gottsched's* followers say; I'll take them [Pope's principles—PBG] up nonetheless.

THIRD SECTION

Examination of the Principles of Pope

I have said above that *Pope*, as a true poet, must be more concerned to search out the sensuous beauties of all systems, and therewith to adorn his poetry, than to make himself his own system, or uniquely and solely to hold himself to one already made. And that he has really done the former, may the countless places in his Epistles testify, which in no way allow themselves to be connected to the above principles, and of which some even run directly against them.

SECOND PRINCIPLE

On what grounds can *Pope* show that the chain of things, in the best of worlds, must be ordered according to a gradual degradation of perfection? Let one cast one's eyes upon the world visible before us! Is Pope's principle well-grounded?—Then ours cannot be the best of worlds. In it, things are related to one another according to the ordering of effects and causes, but in no way according to any gradual degradation. Wise men and fools, animals and trees, insects and stones are wonderfully mixed with each other in the world, and one must cobble together the furthest limbs of the world if one would picture a chain which stretches gradually from nothingness to Godhead. Thus, that which *Pope* calls connection does not take place in our world, and yet it is the best, and no breach can be met within it. Why is this? Is one here not evidently led to the Leibnizian system?—That, specifically because of the divine wisdom, all existences in the best of worlds are grounded in one another; that is, they must be ordered relative to each other by the succession of effects and causes.

THIRD PRINCIPLE

And now, the conclusion of this fancied chain of things falls unexpectedly upon the unavoidable existence of such a rank as mankind, in its own way, occupies. For what

was the necessity, to the filling of the ranks of life and sentiment, really to allow this rank to come to be, such that without it the very limbs of infinite space would lie asunder, and never more stand next to one another in that great and gradual degradation?

SIXTH PRINCIPLE

Here it comes to where *Pope* himself contradicts himself!—In his opinion, as we’ve put it forward above, from the general laws some special events must follow, which contribute nothing to the perfection of the whole, and are allowed only because God does not alter his general will on behalf of special inclinations [*eines Liebblings*].

Or partial ill is universal good,
Or change admits, or Nature lets it fall.

So says he in the Fourth Epistle. Thus, according to him, only some evils which have been permitted in the world are for the general good; some, however, which have been just as much permitted, are not. But this is not so by his own confession, as of the end of the First Epistle he could so confidently say:

All discord, harmony not understood:
All partial evil, universal good?

How does this decisive “all” go together with the above “or, or”? Can one imagine a more palpable contradiction?

But we will investigate further how he carries himself against the system which I have wished to construct for him. Let one see once more how he, after the cited location from the First Epistle

—the first almighty Cause
Acts not by partial, but by gen’ral Laws

Then immediately adds:

Th’ Exceptions few.

The exceptions are few? What sort of exceptions? Why has God made exceptions even in these general rules which serve him as universal guide? He has not done it because of special inclination [*Liebbligs wegen*]; (see the Fourth Epistle, Line 119); nor to avoid an imperfection; for otherwise he should not have left the least imperfection. He has made *only a few* exceptions? Why only a few? There should be none at all, or as many as necessary.

One could say: *Pope* understands under the word *Exceptions* such events as do not agree with the divine view, and yet flow from the general laws. These would be few in the world; for God has chosen such general laws, as in most special cases agree with his idea.—Good!

But then the word **Exceptions* [**in English in original–PBG*] must not be applied to **general laws*. [**in English in original–PBG*] On the side of the general laws God has not made the least exceptions; rather all exceptions affect the agreement of the general laws with the divine idea. Now let one look over the poet’s words:

—the first almighty Course
Acts not by partial, but by general Laws;
Th’ Exceptions few &c.

Does the word **Exceptions* here apply to something other than **general laws*? O! I would rather concede *Pope* to have contradicted himself metaphysically a hundred times in one of his own poems, than that a badly composed and mangled verse slipped from him, such as this one would be, if “th’ Exceptions few” applied not to the general laws, of which he speaks immediately before, but rather to the divine ideas, of which he is not thinking here at all. No! Very certainly he has here, in turn, imagined all evils as exceptions to the general laws, and according to the Malebranchian system unexpectedly thrown in what he has to allow, if he allows anything.

EIGHTH PRINCIPLE

What *Pope* claims in this principle, namely, that no change can occur in the world without its effect expressing itself in the whole, can be sufficiently proven from other grounds than his, which here prove absolutely nothing. *If we*, he says, *would press upward on the powers above, so must those below spring into our place, or a breach remain in the fullness of Creation*. Is it still necessary to refute this conclusion, after one has seen that in the world all does not press materially [*stufenweise*] upward, but rather that more perfect and less perfect existences are mingled with one another, without this fancied order? There will be just as little necessity for me to refute this for a second time, as there was confirmation for this eighth principle given above. *Pope* applies always to his gradual degradation, which only achieves reality in his poetical world, but in ours has absolutely not taken place.

NINTH PRINCIPLE

In this principle, above, two causes of evils in the world, according to *Pope’s* opinion, are brought forward: but a third cause, which the poet likewise declares, I have left out, because I could not grasp it. Here is the location, in its entirety in the Fourth Epistle:

Or partial ill is universal good.
Or change admits, or Nature lets it fall.

I have so explained the words **“Nature lets it fall”* [*in English in original–PBG] as if they meant the same as the poet would say with the words **“Nature deviates”* [*in English in original–PBG]. Namely, these [words], if they are to have a reasonable sense, can mean nothing other than that Nature, on the strength of the general laws which her God has prescribed, brings forth something which is contrary to the divine idea, and will only be allowed her because He wills not to change His general decree.

If the great end be human happiness,
Then Nature deviates, and can Man do less?

I.e., *If the great purpose is the happiness of mankind, and Nature deviates*, etc. Now I believe that it is just these thoughts that *Pope*, through “Nature lets it fall,” *Die Natur lässt es fallen*, has wanted to express. Nature brings forth some evil as consequence of the general mechanical laws, without the divine purpose being really adjusted thereby.

Only, what kind of sense can we connect to the words “Or change admits,” *oder die Abwechslung lässt es zu*? Can the divine wisdom be blamed for something else, according to *Pope’s* system—if one still wishes to call it a system—something other than that it allows evils in the world as the preference of the perfection of the whole over the special parts, or to preserve the generality of the laws which God has not wanted to disturb? What sort of third cause of blame may variance or change offer us?

I think that nothing comes of this; and I would very much rather know what those, who in spite of this will not be dissuaded from [speaking of] a Popean system, believe to come of it? Perhaps they say, even being shown these last citations, that I have misunderstood and missed the true system of the poet, and it is other [citations] entirely from which one must explain it. But what should it be? At least it must be an entirely new one, never before come to human thought; in that all other known systems are so well contradicted by matter [found] here and there in the Epistles.

As proof, I call upon a location to be found in the First Epistle, and which can consist just as little with our Popean system given previously, as with any other [system]. It is the following:

Line 259 on

All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body Nature is, and God the soul;
That, chang’d thro’ all, and yet in all the same,
. . .

Lives thro’ all life, extends thro’ all extent,
Spreads undivided, . . .
. . .

He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all.

[Then is given a German prose translation of the above verses, with the same ellipses. Here are the verses without the ellipses, which are, not 259ff. as given in the Lessing-Mendelssohn text, but rather 267-280:

All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body Nature is, and God the soul;
That, chang’d thro’ all, and yet in all the same;
Great in the earth, as in the ethereal frame;
Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Glow in the stars, and blossoms in the trees,
Lives through all life, extends thro’ all extent,
Spreads undivided, operates unspent;
Breathes in our soul, informs our mortal part.
As full, as perfect, in a hair as heart:
As full, as perfect, in vile man that mourns,
As the rapt Seraph that adores and burns:
To Him no high, no low, no great, no small;
He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all.—PBG]

I am very far from wanting to accuse *Pope* here of Godless opinions. I take up all the more willingly what Warburton has said in his [*Pope’s*] defense against Mr. Crousaz, who wished to claim that the poet had borrowed this part from the errant teachings of *Spinoza*. It cannot likely be entirely consistent with *Spinoza’s* teaching. The words

Whose body Nature is, and God the soul

[given in German] *Spinoza* would never have been able to say; for the expression, “soul and body,” seems at least to indicate that God and Nature are two distinct existences. How little was *Spinoza* of this opinion! But there have been other false philosophers who have really held God to be the soul of Nature, and who have stood equally far from *Spinozism* and from the truth. Even should *Pope*, then, have borrowed from them this unusual way of speaking, how does it stand with the words, “Extends thro’ all extent” [given in German]? Will this teaching be heard as other than that of *Spinoza*? Who else has taken the extension of Nature for a property of God, than that much-discussed false-believer? Nonetheless, as has been said, that doesn’t make one believe that *Pope*, even in this Epistle, has wished to make a display of a dangerous system. He has much more—and it is this which I have already shown above, as it were *a priori*, from that which a poet must do in such cases—simply borrowed the most beautiful and sensuous expressions from each system,

without concerning himself with whether they are right. And thus has he, without a second thought, expressed the omnipresent God partly in the language of the Spin-ozists, partly in the language of those who take God for the soul of the world, because [to express this] in the orthodox way is all too ideal and all too far from the sensuous. Even just so did *Thompson*, in his hymn on the four seasons, not hesitate to say: “these as they change . . . are but the varied God.” A very bold expression, but which no reasonable judge of art can condemn.

Had Pope abstracted a system of his own, he would certainly have thereby renounced all of the privileges of a poet, in order to present it in the most convincing coherence. That he has, notwithstanding, not done this, is a proof that he has gone to work in no other way than I imagine most poets do. He has read over beforehand the material of this writer and that, and, without investigating them according to their own founding principles, retained from each one, whatever he has believed would allow itself to be best rhymed together in well-sounding verse. I believe us, in considering his sources, to have come so far along his track, that I have made some other historical-critical notes, to which I dedicate the following Appendix.

APPENDIX

Warburton, as is known, undertook the defense of our poet against the indictments of Crousaz. The letters which he wrote to this purpose received *Pope*’s most perfect approbation. “You have,” says the latter in a letter to his savior, “allowed all too much right to return to me, as strange as this may sound. You have made my system as clean as I ought to have made it, and have not been able to.”—One may see the entire citation in a note below [this note is here omitted—PBG], from which I add only the words: “You understand me just as well as I understand myself, but you express me better than I have been able to express myself.”

Now then, what says this man, who has so perfectly seen into the system of his hero, and into the opinion of the poet, according to the poet’s own confession? He says: *Pope* is entirely not a follower of Herr von *Leibniz*, but rather of *Plato*, when he claims that God has, of all possible worlds, really allowed the best to be.

Thus *Plato* would have been the first source of our Poet!—We shall see.—Yet *Plato* was a source for *Leibniz* as well. And *Pope* could thus still very well be a *Leibniz*-ian, insofar as he is a Platonist. But hereupon Warburton says, “No! for *Pope* has taken the Platonic teaching within its appropriate limit, while *Leibniz* has stretched it in a

powerful way. *Plato* said: ‘God has chosen the best of worlds.’ But Herr von *Leibniz* says: ‘God could not do other, than choose the best.’”

The distinction between these two principles ought to lie in the capability of preferring one or another of two very similar and good things; and this capability *Plato* has left with God; but *Leibniz* has entirely taken it from Him. I will not prove here, what has already been proven countless times; that this capability is an empty caprice. I will not show further that *Plato* must also have recognized this, because he adds to every free choice, causes of movement; as *Leibniz* has already noted (*Theodicy*, 1st Section, Article 45). I will not press the point, that consequently the distinction itself falls by the wayside; rather I will accept such worse things of him, as Warburton has assigned to him [Plato].

Thus *Plato* may have taught: God has chosen this world, even if he could immediately have chosen another world, perhaps just as good; and *Leibniz* may have asserted: God could have chosen no other than the best. Then what does *Pope* say? Does he express himself in the first way or the other? One reads:

Of systems possible, if ’tis confest,
That Wisdom infinite *must* form the best &c.

[This given in German]—That it *must*? How is it possible that Warburton overlooked this expression? Does this agree with *Plato*, if *Plato* otherwise, as *Warburton* will have it, accepted in God a freedom which works without any grounds for movement? [*Bewegungsgrunde*, translated just above as “causes of movement”—PBG]

Enough of *Plato*, whom *Pope*, consequently, must have left off believing immediately with the first thing he wrote! I come now to the second source that *Warburton* gives the poet; and this is *Lord Shaftesbury*, of whom he says that he [Shaftesbury] has taken the Platonic principles and set them in a clear light. To what extent this may be so, and what the improved system of this lord may be, the Academy would not, just now, know. Thus I will only add here, that *Pope* certainly and openly has read *Shaftesbury* and used him, but that he would have used him far better, if he had understood him properly.

That he really has used him, I could show from more than one location in *Shaftesbury*’s “Rhapsodie,” which *Pope* has interpolated in his Epistles, almost without adding anything of his own other than meter and rhyme. But rather than all, I will only adduce this one. *Shaftesbury* lets *Philocles* answer *Palemon*, who would definitely absolve the physical evil, but is unexpectedly against the moral: “The very storms and tempests had their beauty

in your account, those alone excepted, which arose in human breasts.” [This then given in German.] Is this not just what Pope says:

If plagues and earthquakes break not heav’ns’ design,
Why then a Borgia or a Catiline?

Yet *Pope* must not have understood Shaftesbury, or he would not have used him at all. This free philosopher had penetrated much deeper into the material, and expressed himself much more wisely than the ever-vacillating poet. Had *Pope* followed him, his [Pope’s] thoughts would have seen him far closer to a system; he would have come incomparably closer to the truth and to *Leibniz*. For example, *Shaftesbury* says: “It has been attempted in very many ways to show why Nature should err, and why it comes from an unerring Hand, but with so many incapacities and mistakes. But I deny that it errs,” etc. *Pope* claims against this that “Nature deviates.”—Further says this lord: “Nature is, in its workings, always the same; it never works in a perverse or erring manner; neither impotent nor negligent; rather it is only conquered by a higher rival, and through the stronger might of another Nature.” *Leibniz* himself could not have expressed better, the strife of principles of perfection placed together with one another. But what of this shows in *Pope*, who is supposed to be a follower of Shaftesbury? The latter also says: “Rather we admire, even in this ordering of lower and higher existences, the beauty of the world, grounded in the opposition of contrary things to each other; as from such manifold and disagreeing foundations a general agreement springs.” [Shaftesbury’s words in the original are given in a footnote: “’Tis on the contrary, from this order of inferiour and superiour Things that we admire the World’s Beauty, founded thus on Contrarieties: whilst from such various and *disagreeing Principles* a Universal Concord is established. *Rhapsody*, Part 2, Section 3.—PBG] The words *various* and *disagreeing Principles* [Shaftesbury’s original words] mean here again the rules of order in which can often stand against one another; and had *Pope* had a concept of this, he would have inclined so much less to the side of *Malebranche*. Just as Shaftesbury had a perfectly just concept of this ordering, *Pope*, as we have seen, had not. He [Shaftesbury] calls it a “Coherence or Sympathizing of Things”; and then immediately “a Consent and Correspondence in all.” This “Coherence,” this “Sympathizing,” this “Correspondence,” is something entirely other than the poet’s fancied step-ladder ordering, which one can recognize, at the best, as for poetic beauty.

Overall, I must confess, that *Shaftesbury* very often appears to one to agree with *Leibniz* so happily, that I wonder why one did not long since compare these two philosophers. I wonder even why the Academy itself did not prefer to give out the task of investigating the system of *Shaftesbury*, and holding it against the Leibnizian, rather than the system of *Pope*. They would, in that case at least, have placed philosopher against philosopher, and profundity against profundity, instead of enveloping in an unequal battle poet with philosopher, and the sensuous with the abstract. And for the further reason, that if they wished to humble [humiliate] *Leibniz* by means of some parallel with another famous man, there would have been more to gain with *Shaftesbury* than with *Pope*. *Shaftesbury*’s work, *The Moralists, a Philosophical Rhapsody*, had been brought out already in the year 1709; *Leibniz*’s *Theodicy*, on the other hand, did not see the light until near the end of the year 1710. There would have been something to make of this circumstance, I should think. A philosopher, an English philosopher, who has thought things which *Leibniz* is shown to have thought only an entire year later; shouldn’t this have been exploited at least a bit? I beg the Academy to let it be considered!

And thus also has *Pope* borrowed from *Shaftesbury* the least of his metaphysical faces. [Fn.: an incidental explanation of the vignette behind our title!] Whence else, really, might he have it? Whence else, especially, might he have found a Leibnizian mine! I understand now those principles, which are expressed with the words “possible systems,” and the like. *Warburton*’s demonstration brought me here; but nevertheless I believe I would have discovered it somehow.

One recalls the character of that book, *De Origine mali* [*On the Origin of Evil*], of which *Leibniz* made notes, which are found just after his *Theodicy*. His judgment is that the author of this same book agrees very well with him in half the material, concerning evil in general, and especially physical evil; and departs from him only in the other half, concerning moral evil. This author was Mr. W. King, later Archbishop of Dublin. He was an Englishman, and his work had already appeared in 1702.

I claim that our poet has uncommonly enriched himself from this source; and more surely so, in that not seldom he translates entire locations from the Latin, and simply works them through with poetic flowerets. I will just set forth here the predecessor sections themselves, and let the readers who are capable in both languages make the comparison themselves.

1. *King, Chapt. III, posthumous edition, Brem. 56*

[Latin, with approximate translation—PBG]

Credendum vero est, praesens mundi Systema optimum fuisse, quod fieri potuit, habito respectu ad Dei mentem in eo fabricando.

[It must be believed that the present system of the world is the best which could be made, respecting the mind of God in having made it.]

Pope, Ep. 1, v. 43-44

Of systems possible, if 'tis confest,
That Wisdom infinite must form the best.

2. *King, p.e. 58*

Oportet igitur multos perfectionem gradus, forte infinitos, dari in opificiis divinis.

[It is therefore necessary that a great number of grades of perfection, perhaps an infinite number, be given in the works of God.]

Pope, Ep. 1, v. 46-47

Where all must fall or not coherent be,
And all that rises, rise in due degree, etc.

3. *King, p.m. 72*

Opus erat in systemate mundi globo materiae solidae, qualis est terra, et eam quasi rotae vicem habere credimus in magno hoc automato.

[In the system of the world a globe of solid material was made, which is the earth, and we believe that this has a position like a wheel or gear in this great machine.]

Pope, Ep. 1, v. 56, etc.

So man, who here seems principal alone,
Perhaps acts second to some sphere unknown,
Touches some wheel, on verges to some goal;
'Tis but a part we see and not a whole.

4. *King, p.m. 89*

Quaedam ejusmodi . . . aut totius damno.

[Some of [man's] kind had to be made, since this place in God's creation remained all the rest having been made, as was agreed. But you may wish that another place and lot could have fallen to you; could have been possible. But if you would have occupied another place, that other, or some other, had to have supplied your place, which other, though being more unacceptable to the divine providence, had desired that place which you have occupied. Therefore you know it to have been necessary that either you be what you are, or nothing. For out of all the other places and states which the system or nature of things bore, you either occupy this which you have, and which was to be filled by you,

or it is necessary to the nature of the things that you be displaced, expelled. Or do you expect that, having thrown another from its place, you will supply it? That is, that God would have exhibited peculiar and special gifts to you by the injuries of others? Therefore the divine bounty is not to be blamed, but to be wondered at, that it is established that you be what you are. You could have become neither other, nor better, without all the rest being doomed.]

The entire content of these words, one will find again in the First Epistle of *Pope*; especially between the 157th and 233rd lines. The citations themselves are too long to set here in their entirety; and in part, they have already been presented above, where we spoke of the Popean concept of ordering, and of the necessary place which man must hold in the ranks of things.

What can one now say to such an obvious proof that *Pope* has borrowed, altogether more than thought of, the metaphysical part of his material? And what will one say finally, if I even show that he himself appears to have known no better?—Thus one hears what he wrote in a letter to his friend D. *Swift*. [Dr. Swift, Jonathan Swift, apparently—PBG] *Pope* had had his *Essay on Man* printed without his name, and it came to *Swift's* hand before *Pope* could give him news of it. Swift read the work, only he did not recognize his friend in it. Pope marvels at this and writes: [given in German; the original given in a note—PBG] "I fancy, tho' you lost sight of me in the first of those Essays, you saw me in the second." Doesn't this mean, roughly: though you might not credit me with the metaphysical depth that appears to shine from the first Epistle; yet you ought to have recognized my way of thinking in the remaining Epistles, where the material becomes lighter and more capable of poetic trimmings? *Swift* confesses it also in his answer, in the fact that he has not held *Pope* for such a great philosopher, no more than *Pope* held himself for one. For he [Pope] had without doubt written, right after the quote given above: [given in German, original supplied in a note] "I have only one piece of mercy to beg of you; do not laugh at my gravity, but permit to me, to wear the beard of a Philosopher till I pull it off and make a jest of it myself."* I'll say that again! How much should he thus marvel, if he could know of it, that nevertheless a famous Academy has recognized this false beard as the real thing, and put under-way the most grave investigation of it.

—translated from the German and Latin
by Paul B. Gallagher

* In a letter to Dr. Swift, in the 9th Part of the Knapton 1752 edition of *Works of Pope*, on page 254.